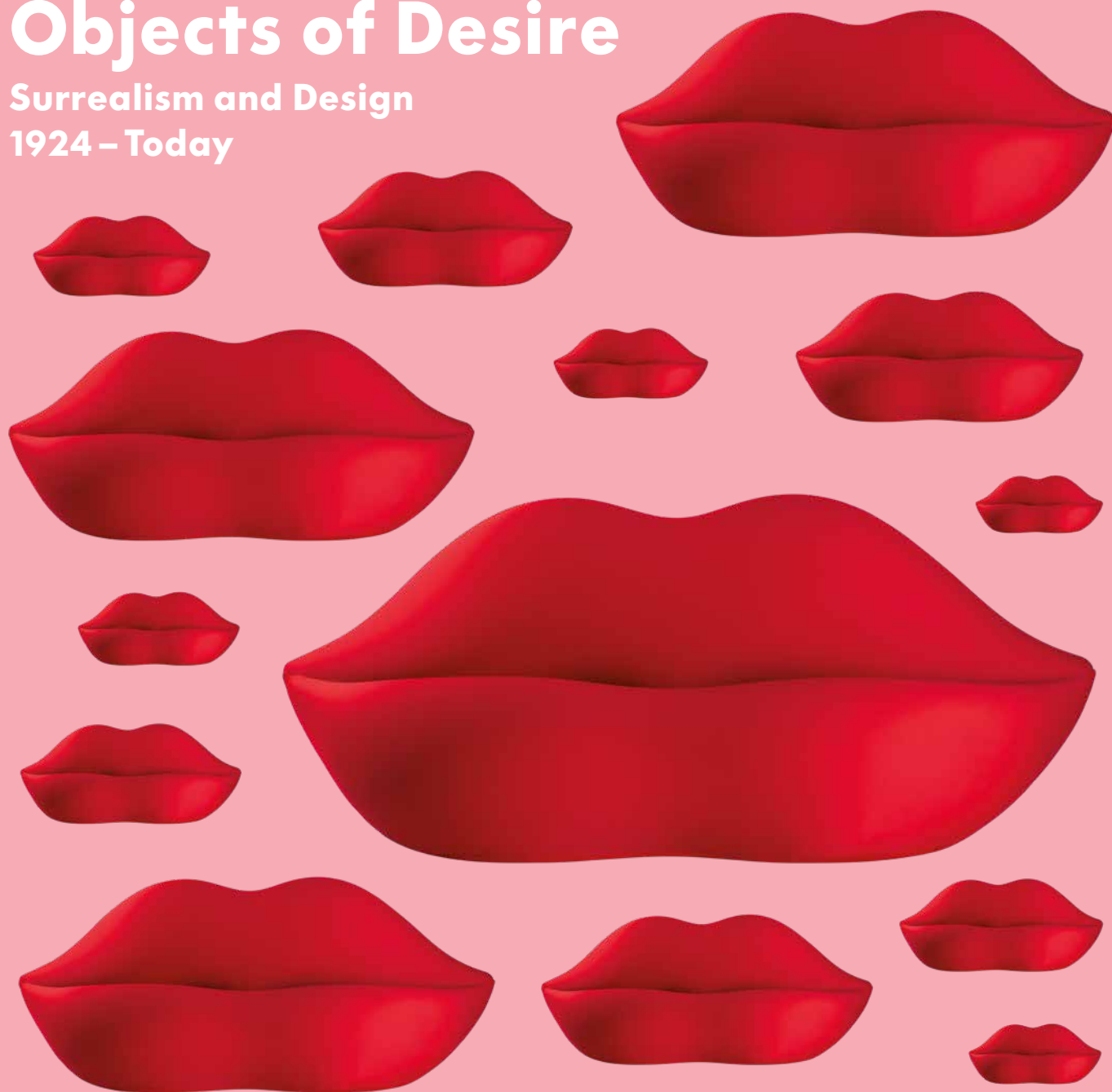


Objects of Desire

Surrealism and Design
1924 – Today





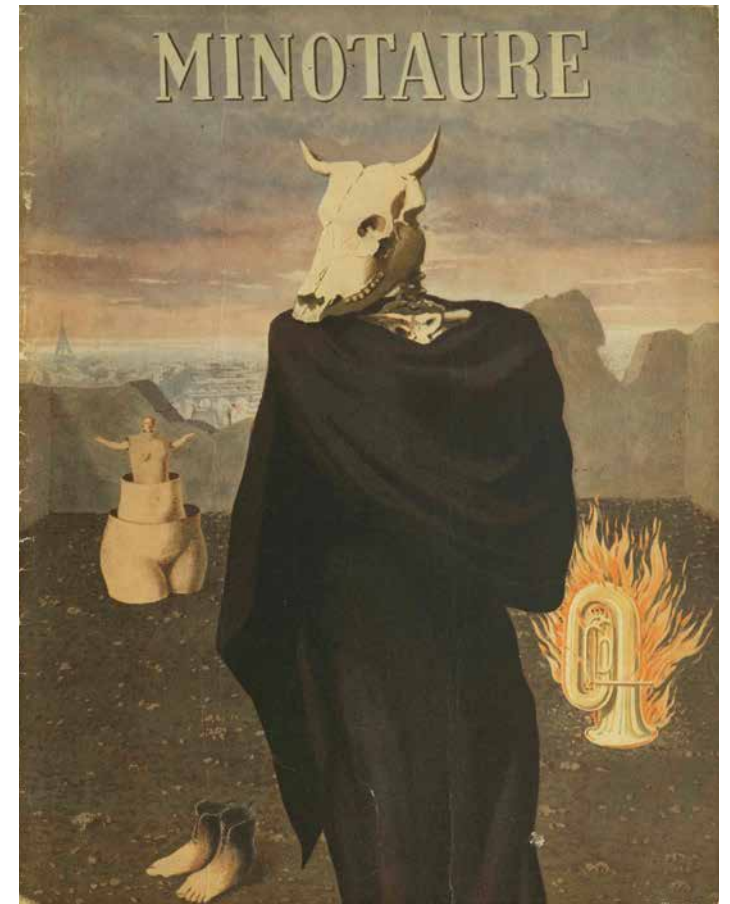
Contents

➤ Exhibition Concept	4
Introduction	6
Exhibition	8
The Dreams of Modernity	10
Image and Archetype	12
Surrealism and Eroticism	14
The Savage Mind	16
➤ Facts	18
➤ Installation Shots	20



Exhibition Concept

Introduction



The Surrealist movement questioned the constraints of physical reality by exploring the subconscious, the human psyche, and the metaphysical as wellsprings of artistic practice. After making its official appearance in 1924 with the publication of André Breton's »Surrealist Manifesto«, Surrealism quickly developed into an international intellectual and political movement whose members came from various backgrounds and disciplines and included writers, filmmakers, and artists.

From its very beginnings, Surrealism looked to design and everyday objects for inspiration. Fewer are aware, however, of Surrealism's decisive impact on design, which has played a crucial role in liberating design from the functionalist dogma of »form follows function«. In light of the increasing criticism directed towards rationalist design beginning in the 1930s

and especially after the Second World War, Surrealism opened new pathways which addressed emotions, fantasies, fears, and other existential questions.

The Vitra Design Museum devotes a major exhibition to this exchange between Surrealism and design. By juxtaposing works of Surrealist art and outstanding design objects from the past 100 years, the exhibition sheds new light on this fascinating and ongoing creative dialogue. This comprehensive exhibition features works by Gae Aulenti, Claude Cahun, Achille Castiglioni, Le Corbusier, Salvador Dalí, Marcel Duchamp, Dunne & Raby, Ray Eames, Front, Iris van Herpen, Frederick Kiesler, Shiro Kuramata, René Magritte, Carlo Mollino, Isamu Noguchi, Meret Oppenheim, Man Ray, and many others.

Exhibition



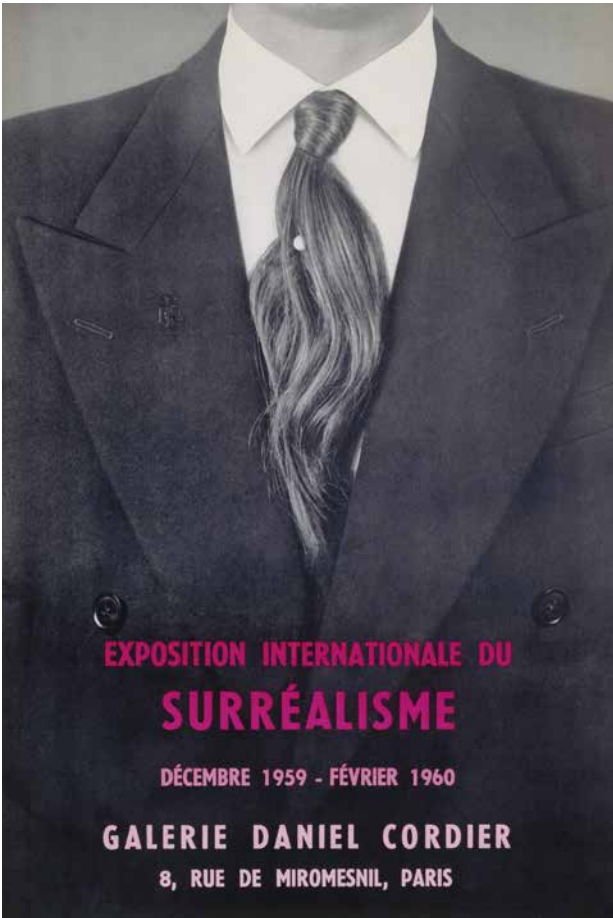
1. Konstantin Grcic, Coathangerbrush, re-edition by Muji, 2002
2. René Clair, «Entr'acte», 1924
3. Man Ray, Le Témoin, 1970
4. Pedro Friedeberg, Hand Chair, c. 1965
Opposite page: Mimi Parent, Poster for the exhibition «E.R.O.S. - Exposition internationale du surréalisme» at Galerie Daniel Cordier, Paris, 1959/60

Unlike previous exhibitions mainly focusing on the objects created by Surrealist artists, »Objects of Desire« juxtaposes Surrealist art works and design pieces in order to reveal the fascinating parallels which to this day have rarely been studied. The exhibition will be divided in four main sections, beginning with an examination of Surrealism between the 1920s and 1950s and the crucial role that design played in the movement's evolution.

In the following three sections the exhibition explores three key themes that have determined the exchange between Surrealism and design ever since: the fascination for archetypical, metaphorical objects and their origins in the subconscious (»Image and

Archetype«); love, eroticism, and gender issues and their close association with creative or destructive powers (»Eros and Thanatos«); and, lastly, the liberation of form arising from an interest in non-linear narratives and the power of the human psyche (»The Savage Mind«).

Exhibits include design objects, paintings, sculptures, collectibles, posters, magazines and books, photographs, as well as historical and contemporary film footage. Elements such as moving images, sound, colour, and photographic enlargements are combined to form an immersive atmosphere that envelopes visitors in the powerful stories and imagery of the Surrealist world.



The Dreams of Modernity

1

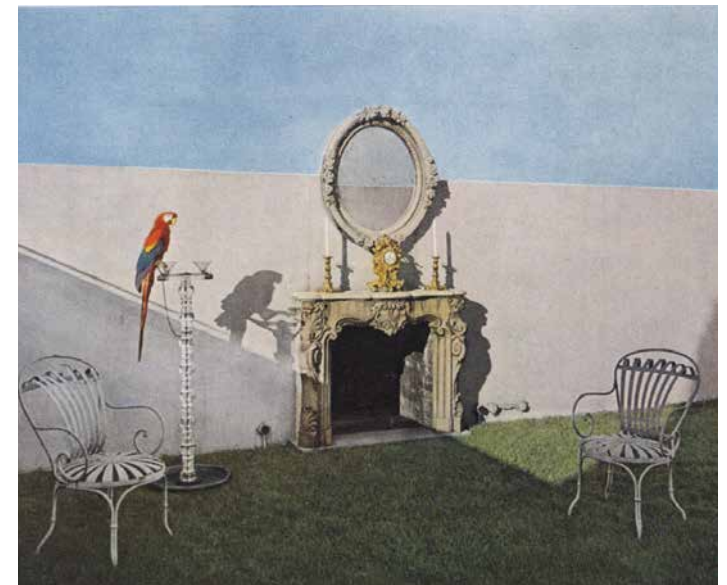


Everyday objects and interiors were already playing an important role for many of the movement's protagonists as Surrealism began to emerge in the 1920s and 1930s. Inspired by Giorgio de Chirico's metaphysical paintings, artists such as René Magritte and Salvador Dalí sought to capture the aura and the mysterious side of everyday things. At the same time – and strongly influenced by Marcel Duchamp's readymades – artists such as Dalí, Meret Oppenheim, or Man Ray experimented with an entirely new form of sculpture by creating absurd objects from found materials and items. Like Duchamp's »Fountain« (1917), these works questioned the boundaries between art and design and aimed to evoke a psychological process which was to change viewers' ways of thinking and living.

From the 1930s onwards, this search for objects' narrative potential had a growing influence on designers such as Charlotte Perriand and Le Corbusier, whose term »objets à réaction poétique«

(objects of poetic reaction) exhibits parallels to the Surrealists' »objets à fonctionnement symbolique« (objects of symbolic function). In the Parisian penthouse he designed for Carlos de Beistegui (1929–31), one of the most prominent collectors of Surrealist art, Le Corbusier blended his own architectural principles with trompe-l'oeil elements and other theatrical effects typical of Surrealist painting.

At the same time in the United States, Ray Eames, Frederick Kiesler, and Isamu Noguchi were in close contact with Surrealist artists such as Hans Hoffmann and Jean Arp – an exchange which led to groundbreaking works such as Kiesler's interior design for Peggy Guggenheim's Art of This Century gallery (1942) and, on a more general level, to organic, anthropomorphic forms that were soon applied to everyday objects and would later have a profound impact on American post-war design.



Opposite page: Salvador Dalí, »Femme à tête de roses« (Woman With a Head of Roses), 1935, oil on wood, 35 x 27 cm, Kunsthau Zürich; * Salvador Dalí, in »Richmond Times-Dispatch«, 24 November 1940
Above: 1. Peggy Guggenheim in her Art of This Century gallery seated on the Correalistic Rocker by Frederick Kiesler, October 1942; 2. Man Ray, »Cadeau/Audace « (Gift), 1921 (1963); 3. Rooftop terrace of the Beistegui Apartment designed by Le Corbusier, 1929–31, published in the magazine »Plaisir de France« no. 18, March 1936; 4. Carlo Mollino, Arabesco, 1950

Image and Archetype

2



One of the key themes of Surrealism was the relationship of the subconscious to everyday objects, which was examined in mysterious still lifes and confusing arrangements that questioned established interpretations of a world we thought we knew. After 1945, a number of designers adopted similar strategies from the arts, including Surrealism, to create surprising, even humorous objects. Among them were Achille and Pier Giacomo Castiglioni as well as Gae Aulenti, who – shortly before designing her table *Tavolo con ruote* (1980) and certainly not by coincidence – had created the exhibition design for a large Duchamp retrospective at Palazzo Grassi in Venice. Then there are seating sculptures such as Pedro Friedeberg's *Hand Chair* (1965), Piero Gilardi's *Sassi* (1967), or Studio 65's *Capitello* (1971) that seem to translate the fragmented objects of Giorgio de Chirico's metaphysical paintings directly into everyday space while simultaneously alluding to Italian classicism. These works illustrate how the

decontextualization and alienation of the seemingly common – one of the main strategies of Surrealist art – became a driving force for the counter-design movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Along with the increasing significance of individual authorship and pictorial references as an inherent part of the postmodern and contemporary design, references to Surrealism have become an even more relevant aspect of design practice since the 1980s. An interest in the archetypal or the unconscious world of images that surrounds us is evident in works such as the *Horse Lamp* (2006) by Front, but also in Jasper Morrison's notion of the »Super Normal« when he wrote: »The wine glasses and other objects from the past reveal the existence of Super Normal, like spraying paint on a ghost.« In the age of digital media and visual communication, the narrative qualities of design objects have become more important than ever – and often they are drawn from sources that were discovered by the Surrealists.



»One must picture everything in the world as an enigma [and] live in the world as if in a vast museum of strangeness.«

Giorgio de Chirico*



Opposite page: Giorgio de Chirico, »Piazza d'Italia Metafisica«, 1921, oil on canvas, 65 x 81 cm, Städtische Kunsthalle Mannheim
Above: 1. Front, *Horse Lamp*, 2006; 2. Piero Gilardi, *Sassi*, 1967/68; 3. Gae Aulenti, *Tour*, 1993; 4. Dan Tobin Smith, »A Matter of Perspectives«, published in the magazine »Wallpaper*« no. 69, June 2004, set design by Lyndsay Milne McLeod; *Giorgio de Chirico, »Manoscritti Eluard (1911-1915)«, in Achille Bonito Oliva (ed.), »Giorgio de Chirico: Scritti/1 (1911-1945)«, Milano: Bompiani, 2008, 612

Surrealism and Eroticism 3



»Convulsive beauty will be veiled-erotic, fixed-explosive, magic-circumstantial, or it will not be.«

André Breton*



Rooted in a belief in the subversive power of love as well as an obsession with its destructive side, erotic fantasies played an important role in the work of many – particularly male – Surrealists. The themes of eroticism and sexuality would soon begin appearing in design, too, such as in Carlo Mollino's sensual interior designs. Another example is the iconic lip-shaped sofa Bocca (1970) by the Italian design group Studio 65, which was anticipated in Salvador Dalí's »Mae West's Face which May be Used as a Surrealist Apartment« (1934/35) as well as Dalí's Mae West Lips Sofa (1938).

But the dialogue between design and Surrealism did not only reflect the imagery of the male mind. Female artists such as Claude Cahun or Meret Oppenheim, who questioned established gender identities and revealed the aggressions or inequalities reflected in seemingly banal objects, also sought to harness this dialogue to push the boundaries. These darker

sides of gender relations also found their way into design, resulting in quasi-fetishist objects such as Gaetano Pesce's La Mamma (1969). Objects such as these conjure a highly ambivalent relationship with femininity prefigured in many Surrealist works, such as Kurt Seligmann's »Ultra-meubles« (1938) or Hans Bellmer's various works of reassembled doll parts.

Beyond their sexual connotations, the works of Pesce and similar designers reflect a fascination for the power of destruction and morbidity which Surrealist theory – following Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis – saw as a logical counterpart of love and sexuality. To an equal extent, the examination of destruction as a source of new creativity also migrated into design, as exemplified by projects such as Maarten Baas' »Where There's Smoke« (2004) for which he burnt several famous design classics, including Gerrit Rietveld's Zig Zag Chair (1932/33).

Above: 1. Carlo Mollino, Interior design for Casa Devalle, Turin, 1939; 2. Raoul Ubac, Photo of a mannequin by Maurice Henry in the »Exposition internationale du surréalisme« at Galerie des Beaux-Arts, Paris, 1938; 3. Ruth Francken, Man Chair, no. 24/24, 1970; 4. Allen Jones, Chair, 1969, edition of 6; 5. Studio Wieki Somers, High Tea Pot, 2003
Opposite page: Salvador Dalí, »Mae West's Face which May be Used as a Surrealist Apartment«, 1934/35, gouache with graphite on commercially printed magazine page, 28.3 x 17.8 cm, The Art Institute of Chicago; * André Breton, »Mad Love« (1937), trans. Mary Ann Caws. Lincoln, NB/London: University of Nebraska Press, 1987, p. 19

The Savage Mind

4



Another connection between Surrealism and design can be found in what the French philosopher Claude Levi-Strauss described as the »savage mind«: A deep fascination for archaism, ritual, and non-linear thinking equally inspired by non-Western, traditional cultures and experimentation with the free use of materials or techniques such as »automatic painting«. In Surrealist art, this approach led to works that are often characterized by the dissolution of form or entirely new, imaginary landscapes with their own formal logic such as those in the paintings of Max Ernst and Yves Tanguy.

Comparable developments have arisen in design since the 1980s, when individual styles and eclectic, experimental approaches emerged under the increasing influence of postmodernism. This opened up new possibilities for formal and technical experimentation and led to cross-fertilization not only between art and design but also with non-Western cultures. Objects created by designers

such as Ettore Sottsass, Andrea Branzi, or Shiro Kuramata addressed themes such as an object's aura, mythology, or psychological effect, making them more reminiscent of modern totems than normal everyday objects. In more recent decades, a similar approach can be observed in the designs of Iris van Herpen, Umberto and Fernand Campana, and Ingo Maurer as well as objects such as Robert Stadler's Pools & Pouf! (2004) or the meditative drawings by French designers Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec.

If design today is capable of addressing the complex – often irrational – patterns of our inner and outer world, then this is also due in no small part to Surrealism's impact. Influenced and inspired by this fascinating movement, designers have been encouraged to create objects that transcend mere reality and make our world a more poetic, mysterious, and magical one.



»After seeing an exhibition on Surrealism and design and comparing it to our own work, we can say: There is a Surrealist vein in our work.«

Fernando Campana*



Above:
1. Andrew Thomas Huang, Video for Björk's »Mutual Core«, 2011
2. Danny Lane, Etruscan Chair, 1984
3. Robert Stadler, Pools and Pouf!, 2004
*Fernando Campana, in »Die Presse«, 14 September 2007

Opposite page:
Ingo Maurer, Porca Miseria!, 1994

Facts

Exhibits

Paintings, design and art objects, sculptures, books, drawings, prints, photographs, films, music, and other works

Curator

Mateo Kries

Head of Exhibitions

Cora Harris
T +49.7621.702.4036
Cora.Harris@design-museum.de

Exhibition floor space

600 – 1,200 m² / 6,000 – 12,000 sq ft

Dates

Vitra Design Museum, Weil am Rhein
28 September 2019 – 19 January 2020

CaixaForum Barcelona
27 February 2020 – 27 September 2020

CaixaForum Madrid
12 November 2020 – 21 March 2021

CaixaForum Sevilla
27 April 2021 – 22 August 2021

CaixaForum Girona
29 September 2021 – 30 January 2022

Museo Centro Gaiás, Santiago de Compostela
7 April 2022 – 28 August 2022

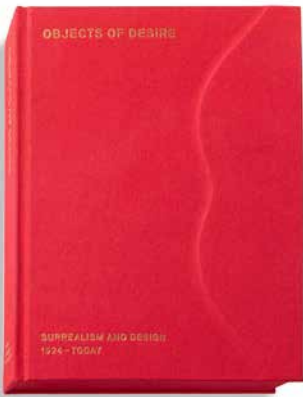
the Design Museum, London
13 October 2022 – 19 February 2023

Exhibition tour

»Objects of Desire: Surrealism and Design 1924 – Today« is available to international venues until approximately 2024. The exhibition travels including all exhibits, contextual films and images, exhibition architecture and all media equipment.

Publication

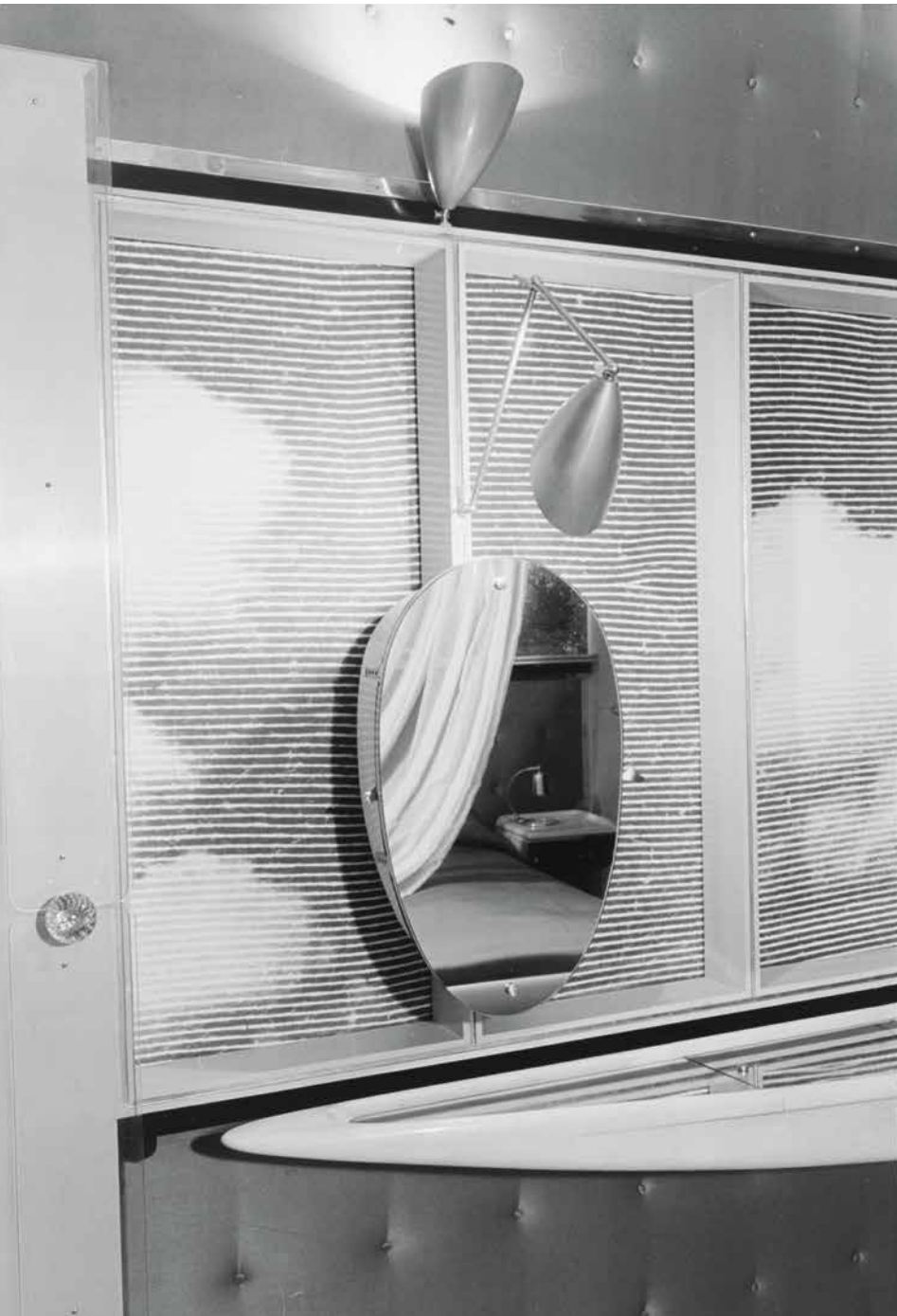
The exhibition is accompanied by an extensive book published by the Vitra Design Museum.



Editors: Mateo Kries, Tanja Cunz

Hardcover, cloth binding with die-cut
7.3 x 9.65 in / 18.5 x 24.5 cm
368 pages, c. 400 images

978-3-945852-33-0 (English)
978-3-945852-32-3 (German)



Imprint/Credits

Front cover: Daniel Streat/Visual Fields © Vitra Design Museum, Bocca sofa: © Gufram/Studio65; p. 6 © Vitra Design Museum, photo: Jürgen Hans; p. 7 Courtesy of Kunsthalle Basel, copyright for the works of René Magritte: © VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2019; p. 8 (image 1) Courtesy of Ryohin Keikaku Co., Ltd.; (image 2) AQUIETBUMP; (image 3) © Vitra Design Museum, photo: Andreas Sütterlin, copyright for the works of Man Ray: © Man Ray Trust, Paris/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2019; (image 4) © Vitra Design Museum, photo: Andreas Sütterlin; p. 9 Courtesy of Gallery Ronny Van de Velde, Antwerp, Belgium, copyright for the works of Mimi Parent: © Succession Mimi Parent; p. 10 Kunsthaus Zürich, copyright for the works of Salvador Dalí: © Salvador Dalí, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2019; p. 11 (image 1) © picture alliance/ASSOCIATED PRESS, photo: Tom Fitzsimmons; (image 2) © bpk/The Art Institute of Chicago/Art Resource, NY, copyright for the works of Man Ray: © Man Ray Trust, Paris/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2019; (image 3) Courtesy of Bowdoin College Library, copyright for the works of Le Corbusier: © FLC/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2019; (image 4) © Vitra Design Museum, photo: Jürgen Hans; p. 12 © akg-images, copyright for the works of Giorgio de Chirico: © VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2019; p. 13 (image 1) © Vitra Design Museum, photo: Andreas Sütterlin; (images 2/3) © Vitra Design Museum, photo: Jürgen Hans; (image 4) © Dan Tabin Smith; p. 14 (image 1) Vitra Design Museum, Inv. No. MAR-15032-0005; (image 2) Association Atelier André Breton, <http://www.andrebreton.fr>, copyright for the works of Raoul Ubac: © VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2019; (images 3) © Vitra Design Museum, photo: Jürgen Hans, copyright for the works of Ruth Francken: © VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2019; (images 4) © Vitra Design Museum, photo: Jürgen Hans; (image 5) © Vitra Design Museum, photo: Andreas Sütterlin; p. 15 © bpk/The Art Institute of Chicago/Art Resource, NY, copyright for the works of Salvador Dalí: © Salvador Dalí, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2019; p. 16 © Ingo Maurer GmbH, Munich; p. 17 (image 1) © Björk/Andrew Thomas Huang, Courtesy of One Little Indian Records; (image 2) © Vitra Design Museum, photo: Jürgen Hans; (image 3) Courtesy of Studio Robert Stadler, photo: © Patrick Gries, copyright for the works of Robert Stadler: © VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2019; p. 19 Vitra Design Museum, Inv. No. MAR-15027-0020; p. 40 © Vitra Design Museum, photo: Jürgen Hans, copyright for the works of Roberto Sebastián Matta Echaurren: © VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2019. Above: Carlo Molino, Interior design for Casa Rivetti, Turin, 1949; back cover: Roberto Sebastián Matta Echaurren, MAGriTTA, 1970. Following pages: Installation views, 2019 © Vitra Design Museum, photo: Ludger Paffrath.

Every effort has been made to trace copyright holders and to obtain their permission for the use of copyrighted material in this brochure. The publisher apologises for any errors or omissions in the above list and would be grateful if notified of any corrections that should be incorporated in future reprints of this brochure.

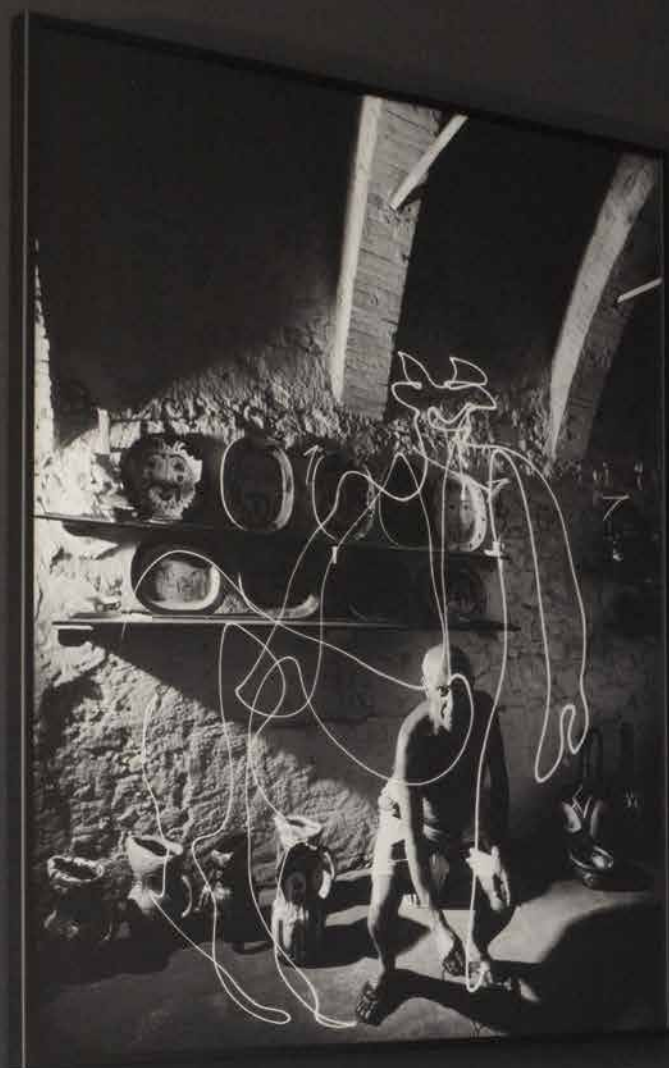
Global Sponsor

BOSS
HUGO BOSS

Supported by

ART MENTOR FOUNDATION LUCERNE

Installation Shots









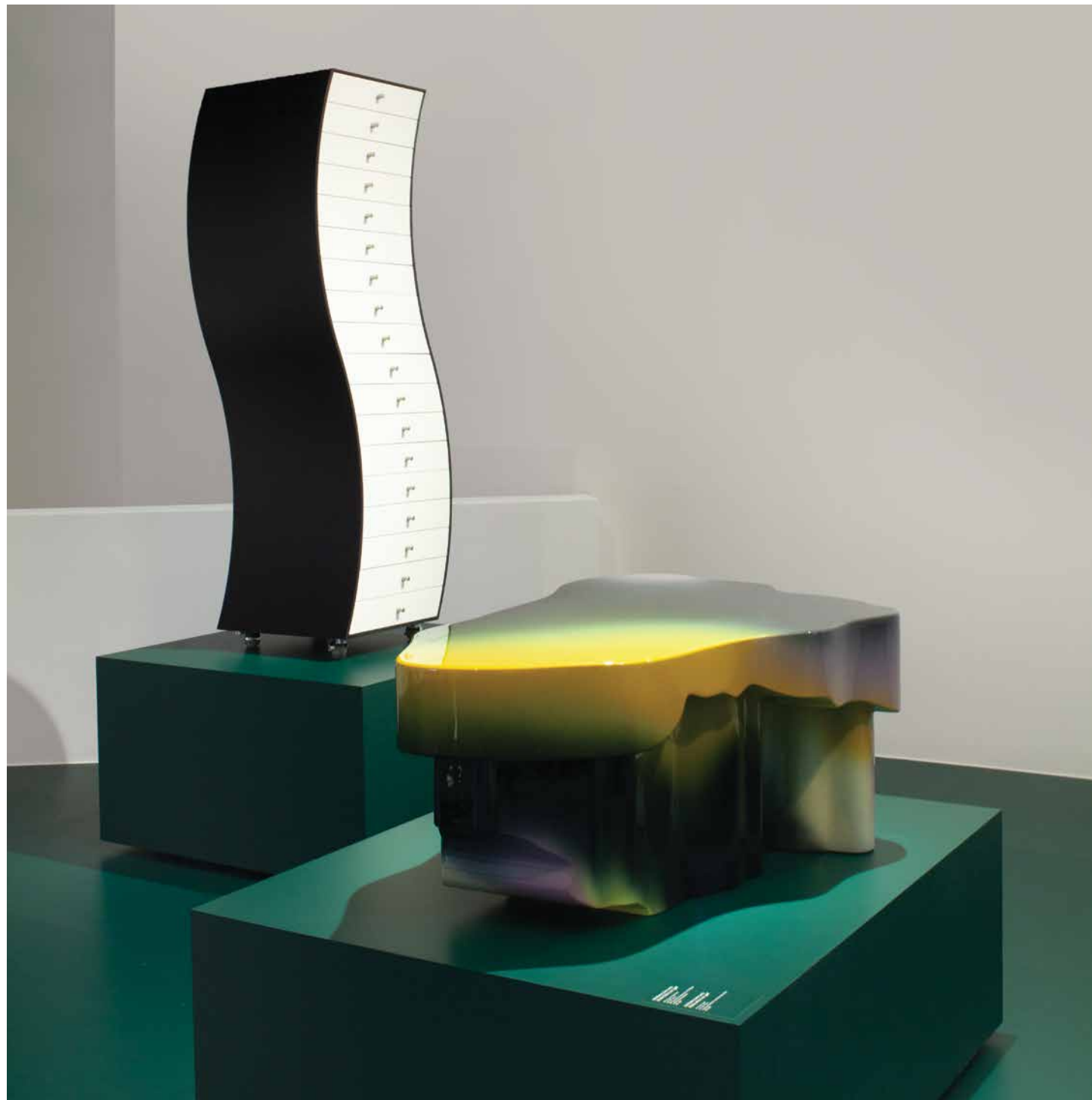








Bitte nicht berühren. Please do not touch.





Charles-Eames-Str. 2
79576 Weil am Rhein
Germany
T +49.7621.702.3200
www.design-museum.de

**Vitra
Design
Museum**